



BY RICHARD WOLFFE

AFTER ALL THE CHEAP MOTELS, the long hours on the road and two bruising defeats, they were looking forward to regrouping back home in Burlington, Vt. But when Howard Dean's senior aides met the day after their latest failure in New Hampshire, it was anything but a cozy get-together. At a downtown law firm's offices, Dean cleared a private room to sit alone with Joe Trippi, his unsuspecting and bedraggled campaign manager. To the outside world Trippi once looked like the lone mastermind, the creator of the Internet-driven machine that had lifted the former Vermont governor from obscurity to the front of the pack last year. But inside the campaign, he was actually losing endless battles with Dean's inner circle of Vermont aides, Kate O'Connor and Bob Rogan, over control of the campaign's cash pile and the candidate's road trips. Now, after burning through \$40 million and a double-digit lead in the polls, it was Dean who was pushing Trippi aside in favor of Roy Neel, a cool Washington operator and longtime aide to former vice president Al Gore. "I have really thought a lot over the last 24 hours and made a bunch of decisions," Dean said clinically. "The first one is I've called Roy Neel to come in and run the campaign." Exhausted by the internal strife and the long campaign, Trippi shot back: "Good. But you need to give him total authority—and really mean it." Dean urged Trippi to stay onboard to run the Web, the media—anything but the campaign itself. But Trippi was heartbroken. "I think the best thing for me to do is to go home," he told his former boss. Late last week Dean was still calling Trippi in hopes of wooing him back.

As the Dean bubble was bursting in Vermont, a tanned and relaxed John Kerry was carrying a football onboard his plane in Boston. Just two months earlier, the once wooden Kerry was firing his own campaign manager. Now he was beaming to the cameras as he threw a spiral down the aisle of his big new charter jet en route to Missouri and South Carolina. It may be a coincidence that he shares his initials with JFK, but Kerry rarely misses a chance to remind the world of another Massachusetts senator turned president. Can Kerry's newly populist message carry the patrician senator in Kennedy style across the South, or the vital swing states of the Midwest, as the Democratic race goes nationwide?

Not if his increasingly anxious foes can help it. Dean may be down, but he's still swinging at Kerry in the hope of winning on points, delegate by delegate, at the Democratic convention in Boston this summer. John Edwards and Wes Clark, the two Southerners in the pack, believe their best is yet to come as the race moves to South Carolina this week, and Virginia and Tennessee next week. Then there are the all-too-familiar traps lurking ahead of any front runner—the oppo research into his voting record, his finances and his personal life, and the close media

★★★★★
REACHING OUT: Riding the momentum, Kerry wooed wide-open Missouri; Edwards mines the South (far left)



Run to Daylight



EYE ON THE GOAL LINE: Dean imploded. Edwards drawled. Clark prayed. And Kerry took another long dash toward his dream. Can he go all the way?

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